

## Vacant Buildings and Pests

The global pandemic has required non-essential businesses to shut down to slow the spread of COVID 19, causing many commercial buildings to sit vacant, with many business owners suspending regular pest control services. Properties left unoccupied can quickly become infested with insects, rodents, and other pests.



### The Lure of Empty Spaces

Pests are continuously seeking out food and shelter, and buildings provide a warm and safe place for them to thrive and survive. Left unattended and without regular maintenance, vacant properties can suffer structural damage, making it easy for pests to enter through small gaps or cracks. Mice can squeeze through an opening the size of a dime, and a determined rat can squeeze its way into an opening of only ½” — that’s about the size of a quarter. Once in, rodents can chew on electrical wires, gnaw on furniture, and tear up insulation. As well, their droppings, urine, and saliva can pose a health risk.

Rodents are not the only pest wanting in. Wildlife, birds, and insects can also enter an abandoned commercial building and trigger an infestation.

### Impact on Business

Pests that gain access to empty buildings can cause significant damage as they look for food and take up residence inside. The cost of dealing with an infestation can escalate quickly, depending on the pest. Mice and rats gnaw on anything in sight, including wires, which can lead to a fire. Birds that congregate on rooftops are unhygienic and dirty, and clean-up will cost thousands of dollars. Flies and cockroaches can carry pathogens that can spread disease and pose a health risk to staff and customers.

### Tips for Pest Proofing & Maintaining Vacant Properties

#### Outdoor:

- Inspect the exterior of unoccupied properties frequently.
- Look for cracks and openings in the building’s foundation, doors, windows, and vents. Repair and seal gaps tightly.
- Inspect areas around buildings that could make a suitable home for pests like potted plant containers, dense foliage, and piles of garbage. Clear yard of all clutter and debris where rats can hide.
- Trim trees and shrubs away from the building.
- Remove any standing water.

#### Indoor:

- Keep kitchen clean.
- Remove all food and waste; do not leave any food on countertops.
- Store food in air-tight containers off the floor, or a fridge or freezer.
- Keep food waste bins clean and tightly shut to control flies.



Pest-proofing buildings left unoccupied during the pandemic is the best way to prevent damage caused by unwanted occupants. Remember to inspect vacant properties frequently for any signs of a pest infestation and take immediate action to eliminate entry points and food sources. The implementation of pest-proofing techniques ensure pests don’t take over and become permanent residences in unoccupied buildings.